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From the Front

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By
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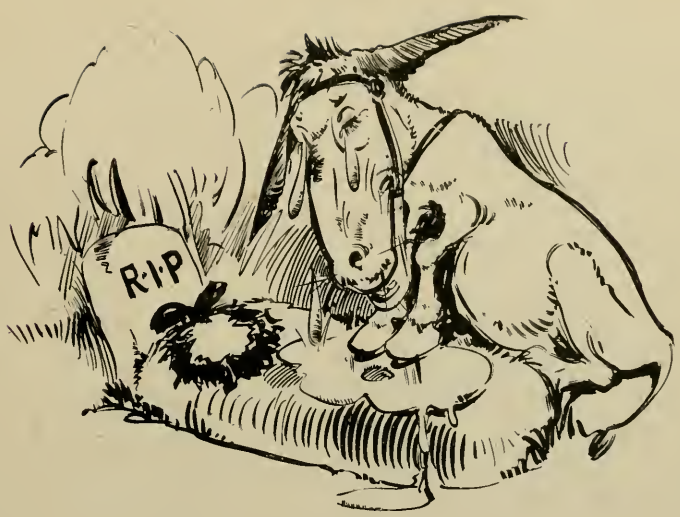
November 21, '09.



I.

"Pop" Frost, ex-puncher, with gun had renown,
Strong, soft-hearted, though he smiled with a frown;
This man among the few, I held as my friend,
And crave your indulgence to recount his end.

II.

"At the front" a man can pile conscience high,
Who toils amidst blacks 'neath the tropic sky;
And rides "Muchacha," a small, old she-mule,
In parts where an oath and gun often rule.

III.

O'er cautious of danger, when none was nigh,
Though she swam well, our Muchacha was shy;
Oft' with yoke of bulls, on the river bank,
From death's grip in mud, "Pop" that mule would yank.

IV.

There men contend that one can only ride,
When to the ground one gracefully can glide
At the mount's caprice—not one's will at all;
'T was thus Muchacha taught to ride and fall.

V.

The trail was not wild, it led through glades fair,
The sun high, wild flowers scented the air;
"Pop's" gun hung handy, Muchacha step'd well,
To her ears spurs tinkled like silver bell.

VI.

Save for clink of spurs, old dry leather's squeak,
And rumble of mule's unshod hoofs, so neat,
Not a sound was heard as he rode along,
Far from home, friends and the world's busy throng.

VII.

He neither saw man nor heard rifle's ring,
Of a sudden, he felt an intense sting,
Sharp and biting, at the base of his brain,
Where hat laps collar both in sun and rain.

VIII.

"Great Scott! they 've got me," he gasped in low breath,
His nerves became palsied with thoughts of death;
Instinctively tried to reach for his gun,
But found that his arm and hand were both numb.

IX.

Blood seemed to flow at the back of his neck,
And he thought for him 't was life's last wreck;
He raised hand to collar, there a clot grasp'd,
Light turned to darkness, he shivered and gasp'd.

X.

He reeled on his mount, felt torpid with pain,
And thought of some whom he 'd ne'er see again;
Muchacha wriggled sidewise, up and down,
Unheeded by "Pop" with his rigid frown.

XI.

Muchacha was far from being a fool;
With animal's instinct of Golden Rule,
She thought 't was drink affected his straddle,
And tried her best to keep him in saddle.

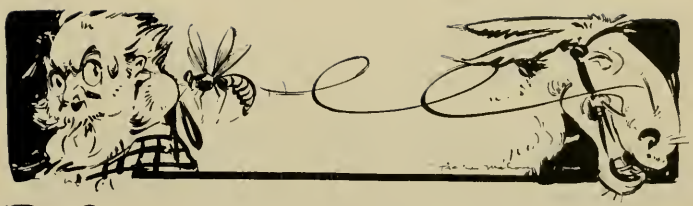
XII.

The mule meant well, but "Pop's" reeling was grand,
Indeed, 't was more than Muchacha could stand;
She stumbled, fell, mule and man went to earth,
Transforming grim fear from sadness to mirth.

XIII.

The two roll'd with ease; "Pop" crack'd a broad smile
As he rose to his feet, unhurt; and, while
Muchacha rose with terrible racket,
"Pop" in hand held a crush'd yellow-jacket.

N. B.—Muchacha is the Spanish for Little Girl.



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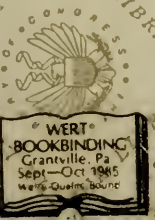

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